Senator Jeanne Kohl-Welles 2005 Legislative Update



Stay in touch!

Please keep me informed of your ideas, concerns and community activities.

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Senate Committees

- Labor, Commerce, Research & Development, Chair
- Early Learning, K-12 & Higher Education
- Ways & Means, Higher Education Lead
- Rules

Other involvements

- Joint Legislative Audit & Review Committee
- Joint Legislative Systems Committee, Chair
- K-12 Education Network
- National Conference of State Legislatures Executive Committee
- Seattle Monorail Authority Board
- Task Force on Criminal Background Check Processes, Co-chair

Dear Constituents,

Happy New Year! Best wishes for a safe, happy and prosperous 2005. I look forward to meeting and talking with many of you over the course of the coming year.

The 2005 session is already underway. While there is always plenty of uncertainty in the halls of government, one thing is already known for sure: legislators are in for a challenging session.

We face some significant challenges this year. The cost of maintaining the current level of critical government services continues to increase, and the state budget has a projected \$1.8 billion dollars revenue shortfall as a result of a lagging economy and continuing revenue shortfall. Once again, there are no easy solutions.

But every year legislators tackle many challenges in trying to sustain our quality of life and ensure a prosperous future for our children. Strong schools, security—of health care and jobs—and a sound economy: they continue to be our goals. This year another key priority is election reform—an obvious one! I'm confident that we can make progress on these issues, because in addition to the great challenges, we have real opportunities this year.

The Democrats reclaimed the Senate majority in November's elections, which means that, as Democrats do in the House, we again chair the committees and set the agenda for the flow of legislation.

I have the privilege to chair the Senate Labor, Commerce, Research & Development Committee, a committee critically important to Seattle residents. I am pleased to be leading the discussion on strengthening our business community, employment rates, and family-wage jobs.

I also serve on the Senate Early Learning, K-12 & Higher Education Committee, which provides an excellent forum for highlighting the importance of the full continuum of education. I remain committed to increasing access to an affordable and quality higher education system, and serve as the lead on writing the higher education budget for the Senate Ways & Means Committee.

I'm optimistic about our opportunities to move in a forward direction this year, and I invite you to be a part of the process. You can take an active role in the crafting of our state's budget and policies by completing the survey enclosed in this newsletter.

I also encourage you to visit me in Olympia anytime. The Legislative Building is open for business after being closed for three years for earthquake damage repairs and renovation, and it's well worth coming down to see all the improvements. You're especially encouraged to visit on Presidents' Day for the 36th District Day (details inside).

If you're unable to visit Olympia, I'd still love to hear from you. Let me know your thoughts — by e-mail, phone call or letter, and I'll be sure to keep in touch.

Sincerely,

Jeanne Kohl-Welles

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Investing in the future

Making higher education more accessible is a smart economic investment.

There's no single factor likely to affect our economic survival more than the degree to which we invest in our students and our work force, and in developing the skills and knowledge needed to prosper in our new economy.

However, instead of discussing higher education in the context of the broader economic climate, the Legislature has continued to focus more narrowly on the 'business climate' by giving tax breaks to businesses and by imposing funding cuts to higher education while increasing tuition on students.

The Legislature faces a \$1.8 billion revenue shortage for the 2005-2007 biennium. While we must do a better job funding our higher education system, investment requires revenue.

As a member of the Senate Ways & Means Committee, I will advocate a proposal of mine from the previous session to create an education enrichment fund dedicated to K-12 and higher education, funded through a flat income tax for high earners (\$500,000 for an individual; \$1 million for a couple). Without such an investment, the best we can expect is a stagnant economy and the loss of even more family-wage jobs.

I continue to believe that increasing the number of well-prepared, highly trained graduates will keep our state economy moving forward. Investing in their education is investing in their families, their eventual employers, their communities, and our state as a whole.

That's about as smart as it gets.

Education and our economic climate

Our state is currently under strain as we make the transition from a manufacturing-based economy to the innovation-based economy of the 21st century. For many, the process has been a painful one, and there's no guarantee that it will end any time soon.

The fact is, we're at a turning point. Our state will complete the transition and begin to answer the demands of the new economy by creating new opportunities for Washington workers in emerging industries, or we'll fall behind the curve, without having the resources to compete and grow, battling recession and unemployment that — as is the case currently — has been much worse in Washington than in most other states.

Most of us would prefer the first scenario to the second. After all, our economic survival is at stake. Washington's higher education system is among the best in the nation, and should be a catalyst in making the first scenario a reality. The equation is simple: quality education programs lead to jobs.

Yet our state consistently ranks among the states with the highest unemployment rate in the nation. And I hear from many employers in high-paying fields, such as technology, nursing and biomedicine, that they have numerous jobs available, they just don't have qualified candidates to fill them. They are wondering where the next generation of growth will come from. Keeping these industries prospering requires providing them the well-educated workers they need to thrive.

According to the Higher Education Coordinating Board, our state's colleges and universities will need to make room for 45,000 additional students over the next six years. Providing this access affordably, and without sacrificing quality, has long been my highest priority.

But access not only means adding enrollment slots, it also means facilitating the transfer of community college students to our baccalaureate institutions.

It means reducing barriers for non-traditional students, such as unemployed adults, students who speak English as a second language, and working single parents updating their skills.

It means increasing the amount of grants and financial aid available to students from low-and middle-income families.

To do so, I believe we should conduct a comprehensive study of our higher education system to determine which areas currently are underserved and need additional academic resources.

I believe we also should develop a master plan for education — pre-kindergarten through college — to create a comprehensive, seamless education system that meets the learning needs of all of Washington's citizens.

And we must allow public colleges and universities flexibility in evaluating applicants during the admissions process. Our schools should be accessible to everyone, including highly-qualified minority applicants. Washington is the most trade-dependent state in the nation, and is increasingly part of the global workforce. So we need to encourage diverse student bodies that reflect the increasingly global workplace to prepare our students for the real world.

The bottom line is: neither the education community nor the employer community can succeed without the other. The last thing we want is for Washington employers to leave the state in order to find qualified candidates, or for highly-trained Washington workers to leave the state in order to find good jobs.

My work this session, particularly on the Senate Early Learning, K-12, & Higher Education and the Labor, Commerce, Research & Development committees, focuses on bridging the distance between the two, to ensure that students are ready to enter the work force upon graduation, and that the jobs they trained for are available.

36th Legislative District Day — Monday, Feb. 21

(Presidents' Day)

Please join me, along with state Reps. Mary Lou Dickerson and Helen Sommers, on Monday, Feb. 21, for the 36th Legislative District Day in Olympia. We will be setting aside part of the day to meet with constituents from the district. It's an excellent way to get to know us and learn about state government. Here's the tentative schedule:

- 10:30 a.m. Meet in the Cherberg Building's Conference Rooms ABC to kick off the day and receive a legislative schedule.
- 12:00-1:00 p.m. Brown bag lunch in the Cherberg Building's Conference Rooms ABC. This is your time to ask us questions about legislative issues of interest to you.
- The rest of the day is yours. Depending on the Legislature's schedule, you might want to sit in on a committee hearing.

For further details, please call my legislative assistant Ken Camp at (360) 786-7670.

Rescind or reduce corporate tax breaks.

With a deficit of at least \$1.8 billion, the Legislature may

programs and services in order to balance the budget. How do you rate funding for each of the following programs and services, on a 5-point scale with $1 =$ should not be cut and $5 =$ should be cut?
1) Clean air and water programs VOTER 1 1 2 3 4 5 1 2 3 4 5 O O O O O O O O O
2) Criminal justice/public safety VOTER 1 VOTER 2
1 2 3 4 5 1 2 3 4 5 O O O O O O O O
3) Access to higher education VOTER 1 VOTER 2
1 2 3 4 5 1 2 3 4 5
O O O O O O O O O O O O O O O O O O O
VOTER 1 VOTER 2
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5) Health care for low-income families
VOTER 1 VOTER 2 1 2 3 4 5 1 2 3 4 5
0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0
6) K-12 education VOTER 1 VOTER 2
1 2 3 4 5 1 2 3 4 5 0 0 0 0 0 0
7) Environmental protection
VOTER 1 VOTER 2 1 2 3 4 5 1 2 3 4 5 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0
8) Social services
VOTER 1 VOTER 2 1 2 3 4 5 1 2 3 4 5
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Other:
1 2 3 4 5 1 2 3 4 5 O O O O O O O O O
In order to balance the budget, the Legislature should (check as many as apply):
Increase existing revenues.
VOTER 1 VOTER 2
Rely solely on spending reductions. VOTER 1 VOTER 2
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Repeal or amend initiatives that have eliminated state revenues.
VOTER 1 VOTER 2
Repeal or amend school and/or health-care funding initiatives VOTER 1 VOTER 2

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VOTER 1
                      VOTER 2
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                        0
Restructure our tax system.
      VOTER 1
                      VOTER 2
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                        0
Use a combination of funding cuts and revenue increases.
      VOTER 1
                      VOTER 2
        0
Other ideas for new revenue:
The Legislature also is being asked to make additional
investments for the future. How do you rate funding
for each of the following programs and projects, on a
5-point scale with 1 = should be funded and 5 = should
not be funded?
State workers' collective bargaining agreement
                   VOTER 2
1 2 3 4 5
     VOTER 1
   1 2 3 4 5
                   00000
   00000
I-728 for smaller class sizes
      VOTER 1
                      VOTER 2
   1 2 3 4 5
                   1 2 3 4 5
   00000
                   00000
I-732 for teacher cost of living allowances (COLAs)
      VOTER 1
                      VOTER 2
    1 2 3 4 5
                   1 2 3 4 5
   00000
                   00000
Additional higher education enrollments
      VOTER 1
                      VOTER 2
    1 2 3 4 5
                   1 2 3 4 5
   00000
                   00000
NASCAR race track in Washington
                   VOTER 2
1 2 3 4 5
     VOTER 1
   1 2 3 4 5
   00000
                   00000
Transportation improvements to:
   Alaskan Way Tunnel ($3.1 to $4.5 billion)
      VOTER 1
                     VOTER 2
    1 2 3 4 5
                   1 2 3 4 5
   00000
                   00000
   Viaduct rebuild ($2.7 to $3.1 billion.)
     VOTER 1
                    VOTER 2
                   1 2 3 4 5
    1 2 3 4 5
   00000
                   00000
   SR-520 bridge
      VOTER 1
                      VOTER 2
                   1 2 3 4 5
    1 2 3 4 5
   00000
                   00000
   Mercer Street realignment
      VOTER 1
                      VOTER 2
                   1 2 3 4 5
    1 2 3 4 5
                   00000
   00000
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Every two years, the Legislature sets funding priorities for public colleges and universities. Indicate how you rate each of the following, on a 5-point scale with 1 = very important and 5 = not important.

Need-based grants



Merit-based financial aid

	V	OTER	1		VOTER 2						
1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5		
0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	Ο	0		

Increased access, added enrollment slots

	VC	OTER	1			V	OTER	2	
1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
О	Ο	0	0	Ο	0	0	0	0	0

State university and community college salary increases for:

Faculty (full time)

VOTER 1						VOTER 2							
1	2	3	4	5		1	2	3	4	5			
0	0	0	0	0		0	0	0	0	0			

Faculty (part time)

	V	OTER	? 1				VC	OTER	2	
1	2	3	4	5		1	2	3	4	5
0	0	0	0	0	(С	Ο	0	0	0

Programs for high-demand fields like nursing and high-tech

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VOTER 1 VOTER 2
1 2 3 4 5 1 2 3 4 5
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Programs for special-need fields like special education

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VOTER 1 VOTER 2
1 2 3 4 5 1 2 3 4 5
0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0
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Other:

The Legislature appropriates funds to subsidize enrollments at our public colleges and universities, with students charged tuition to make up the gap in the cost of instruction. Which do you believe is most important? Select one.

Increase tuition to ensure quality of instruction.

VOTER 1	VOTER 2
0	0

Keep tuition low and limit new enrollments.

Increase state contribution for instructional costs.

The Legislature currently sets tuition rates for resident undergraduate students, while colleges and universities decide what to charge out-of-state and graduate students. What should the Legislature do? Select one.

Keep tuition decisions with the Legislature.

Allow colleges and universities to set all tuition rates.

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VOTER 1 VOTER 2
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Keep decisions about resident undergraduate tuition with the Legislature, but allow colleges and universities to set tuition for graduate and non-resident students.

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VOTER 1 VOTER 2
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How important is it to have publicly-funded colleges and universities, on a 5-point scale with 1 = very important and 5 = not important?

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VOTER 1 VOTER 2
1 2 3 4 5 1 2 3 4 5
0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0
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How important is it to have a dedicated funding source (i.e., revenue earmarked exclusively) for our colleges and universities, on a 5-point scale with 1 = very important and 5 = not important?

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VOTER 1 VOTER 2
1 2 3 4 5 1 2 3 4 5
0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0
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How important do you believe university research is to our state's economy and prosperity, on a 5-point scale with 1 = very important and 5 = not important?

Public schools

This session, the Legislature has an opportunity to significantly shape education policy in the state. Indicate how you rate each of the following, on a 5-point scale with 1 = very important and 5 = not important.

Change the education levy threshold from a super majority to a simple majority.

	V	OTER	1		VOTER 2						
1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5		
0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	C		

Conduct a funding study of our education system's needs.

Decrease local funding burden by increasing the contribution from the state.

	V	OTER	1 1		VOTER 2						
1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5		
0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	Ο	0		

Develop an education master plan from pre-kindergarten through university.

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VOTER 1 VOTER 2
1 2 3 4 5 1 2 3 4 5
O O O O O O O O O O
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Increase Learning Assistance Program funding (extra assistance for struggling students).

	V	OTER	1			V	OTER	2	
1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Provide better compensation for teachers and staff.

VOTER 1	VOTER 2
1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
00000	00000

Reduce class sizes.

	V	OTER	1			VOTER 2							
1	2	3	4	5		1	2	3	4	5			
0	0	0	0	0	(0	0	0	0	0			

Remove the WASL (Washington Assessment for Student Learning exam) as a graduation requirement.

	V	OTER	1		VOTER 2						
1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5		
0	Ο	0	Ο	0	0	0	0	Ο	0		

Require additional physical education time.

VOTER 1						VOTER 2						
1	2	3	4	5		1	2	3	4	5		
0	0	0	0	0		0	0	0	0	0		

Require districts develop policies prior to using physical restraint (e.g., handcuffs) with students.

	VC	OTER	1			VOTER 2							
1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5				
0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0				

Require safe drinking water in Washington public schools.

	V	OTER	1		VOT	VOTER 2							
1	2	3	4	5	1 2 3	3	4 5						
0	0	0	Ο	Ο	000) () C)					

Require seat belts on school buses.

	V	DTER	1		VOTER 2							
1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5			
0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	Ο	0			

Some of the legislation that I'm sponsoring

What is your level of support for each of the following proposals, on a 5-point scale with 1 = strongly support and 5 = strongly oppose?

Soil contaminants and child use facilities

Encourage schools, parks, fields, youth camps, day care and child care centers to test for soil contaminants by providing financial and technical assistance for testing costs and logistics.

	V		VOTER 2							
1	2	3	4	5	1		2	3	4	5
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Clergy reporting of child abuse

Expand mandatory reporters of child abuse and neglect to include members of the clergy. Currently, the list of those who must report child abuse and neglect includes teachers, psychologists, medical care providers, and social workers.

VOTER 1						VOTER 2							
1	2	3	4	5		1	2	3	4	5			
0	0	0	0	0		0	0	0	0	0			

Gun control

Establish an assault weapons ban in Washington.

	V	OTER	1		VOTER 2						
1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5		
0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0		

Require background checks for those wishing to purchase firearms at gun shows.

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VOTER 1						VOTER 2							
1	2	3	4	5			1	2	3	4	5		
0	0	0	0	0			0	0	0	0	0		

Require gun-owners with children at home to store their guns safely.

	V	OTER	21		VOTER 2						
1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5		
0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0		

Equality

Add sexual orientation to our state's equal rights statutes.

	OTER		VOTER 2							
1	2	3	4	5		1	2	3	4	5
0	0	0	0	0	(C	0	0	0	0

Establish marriage equality for same-sex couples.

	VC	OTER	1			VOTER 2							
1	2	3	4	5	1		2	3	4	5			
\circ	0	0	0	0	(C	0	0	0	0			

Refine Washington's affirmative action law (I-200) to comply with the recent U.S. Supreme Court decision upholding the right of public universities to consider race as a factor in admissions procedures to achieve a diverse student body.

	VC	OTER	1			VOTER 2							
1	2	3	4	5	1		2	3	4	5			
C	0	Ο	0	0)	0	0	Ο	0			

Higher education credit card policy

Require public higher education institutions to develop a policy regarding credit card advertising on campus.

		VOTER 2								
1	2	3	4	5		1	2	3	4	5
0	0	0	0	0	(C	0	0	0	0

Stem cell research

Establish a state policy of permitting stem cell research. This bill would permit stem cell research using human embryonic stems cells, human embryonic germ cells, and human adult stem cells from any source, while prohibiting reproductive cloning.

VOTER 1						VOTER 2						
1	2	3	4	5		1	2	3	4	5		
0	0	0	0	0		0	0	0	0	0		

Establish a stem cell research center, perhaps at the University of Washington or Washington State University, similar to efforts underway in California and New Jersey.

	V	OTER	1		VOTER 2						
1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5		
0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0		

Instant run-off voting

Allow Seattle and the state's nine other first class cities the option to implement their own election system, which could include instant run-off voting.



Restore the right to vote to ex-felons once they have completed their punishment, regardless of whether they have paid off monetary debts.

VOTER 1						VOTER 2						
1	2	3	4	5		1	2	3	4	5		
0	0	0	0	0		0	0	0	0	0		

Place First Class Postage Here

Senator Jeanne Kohl-Welles

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Please affix a stamp, tape the survey shut and mail it to my Olympia office. Thanks.

36th DISTRICT SESSION SURVEY -

Seattle to expand Discovery Park

In a big victory for Seattle residents, and those in the Magnolia neighborhood in particular, the City of Seattle will officially acquire the Capehart housing property as a part of Discovery Park.

Discovery Park is the city's largest park, and is home to wildlife such as eagles, herons and beavers. It's the jewel of our region, and many constituents and I were worried that when the Navy sold off 23 acres of its land, commercial developments would alter the face the park.

I am delighted that the City, with efforts by many Discovery Park supporters, has come to an agreement to integrate the land in the park and restore it as open space, and to preserve the historic structures. I'll be working to secure funds through our capital budget that will contribute to the outcome.



If you wish to receive periodic e-mail newsletters, please go to my Web site: http://www1.leg.wa.gov/senate/kohl-welles and click on the link "Subscribe to Sen. Kohl-Welles' e-mail list here."

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